

REMARKS

The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Independent claims 1 and 13 have been amended to recite that the printed layer is made of discontinuous and individual printed parts which are isolated from one another, the maximum printed length of the individual parts being 10 mm or smaller, and the interval between the individual printed parts being at least 1 mm at the narrowest.

The Official Action rejected claim 14-18 under §112, first paragraph.

Claims 14-16 have been amended to use terms consistent with the specification. Further, claim 18 has been canceled.

In view of these amendments, withdrawal of the §112, first paragraph rejection is solicited.

The Official Action rejected claims 1-13 as obvious over OCHI et al. 6,110,574, in view of MEHTA et al. 6,416,911.

The Official Action rejected claims 14-20 as obvious over OCHI et al. in view of MEHTA et al., and in further view of ROWLAND 5,376,431.

When discussing claims 4-5 and 19-20, the Official Action acknowledges that the references, both individually and in combination, fail to teach the recited printing length and separation distances.

The Official Action states that said recited dimensions were merely an optimization. Specifically, the Official Action stated that it would have been obvious to modify the sheeting of OCHI et al. to vary the length and printed area percentage since it would be only a optimum value of a result effective variable, which optimization would involve only routine skill in the art. The Official Action stated that the spacings in area were affected by the process conditions of the machine, e.g., time and speed.

In the present invention, there is an advantage of providing a printed layer of discontinuous and individual printed parts where they are isolated from each other as recited. That is, the individual parts are isolated from one another by at least 1 mm at the narrowest, the individual printed parts having a maximum printed length of no more than 10 mm.

This takes into consideration that even when water or solvent enters the interface between the fluorine-containing resin film and the printed layer as a result of

outdoor use or a cleaning operation with a solvent to remove stains or dirt, the penetrating water or solvent stays in the independent printed parts and is not allowed to spread all over the retroreflective sheeting.

It is only the present invention that makes this disclosure and would therefore suggest that the individual printed parts be sized and spaced as recited. Without the motivation provided by the present disclosure, there is no motivation to optimize the spacing as suggested by the Official Action.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the reasoning offered by the Official Action and believe that one of skill in the art would not be motivated to provide a printed layer made of discontinuous and individual parts sized and spaced as recited.

As acknowledged by the Official Action, OCHI et al. does not even teach a printed layer of discontinuous and individual printed parts between the film and adhesive. Note that the Official Action offers MEHTA et al. for teaching an image bonding treatment of retroreflective surfaces comprising ink and adhesive coatings, for the purpose of providing information on tags, labels, and signs. It is this teaching that the Official Action uses to modify the retroreflective sheeting of OCHI et al. to

meet the recitation of a printed layer made of discontinuous printed parts. In view of this, any consideration given to sizing and spacing of the thus-modified OCHI et al. reference, must take into account the MEHTA et al. teaching. The products that would be produced by the combination suggested by the Official Action would not be dimensioned as recited. Applicants believe it is clear that any argument that would result in the recited dimensions could fairly only be based on impermissible hindsight.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the obviousness rejection and allowance of all the pending claims are respectfully requested.

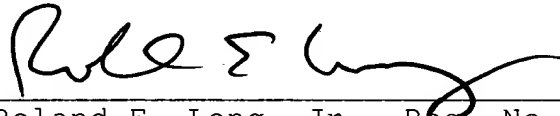
Applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any

additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37
C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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